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ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY KICKS OFF SATURDAY WITH IROQUOIS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2016) – The Road to the Kentucky Derby officially begins Saturday at Churchill Downs as eight promising 2-year-olds, including graded stakes-placed juveniles **Recruiting Ready** and **Thirstforlife**, were entered in Saturday's 35th running of the \$150,000 Iroquois Presented by TwinSpires.com (Grade III) at 1 1/16 miles.

The Iroquois, one of four stakes events on the first Saturday of the 11-day September Meet at Churchill Downs, is the first scoring race on the 2016-17 "Road to the Kentucky Derby" – the series of 35 races that will ultimately determine the field for the 143rd running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI) on Saturday, May 6, 2017. Points awarded to the Top 4 Iroquois finishers will be 10-4-2-1 as part of the 19-race "Prep Season" that showcases foundation-building races in advance of the "Kentucky Derby Championship Series," which begins in late February.

The Iroquois also is part of the Breeders' Cup "Win & You're In Juvenile Division" and its winner will earn an automatic berth into the \$2 million Sentient Jet Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI). Breeders' Cup will pay entry fees and provide travel allowances for the connections to compete in the Nov. 5 Breeders' Cup Juvenile at Santa Anita.

Sagamore Farm's Recruiting Ready is likely the horse to run down in the eight-horse Bashford Manor. The Maryland-based colt returns to Churchill Downs in an attempt to stretch his brilliant speed over two turns after two hard-luck losses against graded stakes company. The Kentucky-bred son of Algorithms was caught in the final strides of June's Bashford Manor (GIII) as the 1-2 favorite by **Classic Empire** in the second-fastest renewal of the six-furlong race (1:09.39). Then, in the Aug. 14 Saratoga Special (GII) over 6 1/2 furlongs, it was Florida invader **Gunnever's** turn to run down the 1-2 favorite after Recruiting Ready ran the first half-mile in a swift :45.04. Recruiting Ready was subsequently disqualified from second to fourth for bumping rivals down the stretch.

"(Jockey **Irad Ortiz Jr.**) just said he idled a bit there at the end and backed off the bit," trainer **Horacio DePaz** said after the Saratoga Special. "It seems like he likes to run better when he's on the bit. It's just a little immaturity. He thinks he has it done and then he backs off. He always gets run down. He looked pretty comfortable, and that horse (winner Gunnever) was flying there at the end. That's a pretty nice little horse to run him down."

DePaz has secured the riding services of California-based Hall of Fame jockey **Gary Stevens** aboard Recruiting Ready. The duo will break from post 7.

Gary Barber and St. Elias Stable's Thirstforlife enters the Iroquois off a third-place finish in the Best Pal (GII) at Del Mar behind the impressive **Bob Baffert**-trained **Klimt**, who'd return to win the Del Mar Futurity (GI). Thirstforlife, a Stay Thirsty colt trained by **Mark Casse**, broke his maiden at Churchill Downs by 6 1/2 lengths in early June at odds of 1-9. He'll be reunited Saturday with top jockey **Florent Geroux**, who was aboard the Kentucky-bred in his career debut that resulted as a third-place finish in the \$100,000 Kentucky Juvenile on Kentucky Derby week.

The complete Iroquois field from the rail out (with jockey): Ellis Park Juvenile winner **Lookin at Lee** (Ricardo Santana Jr.), Ellis Park Juvenile third **Honor Thy Father** (Corey Lanerie), 4 3/4-length Gulfstream Park maiden winner **Skinflint** (Jesus Castanon), Thirstforlife (Geroux), the D. Wayne Lukas-trained Saratoga maiden winner **Blame Will** (Luis Saez), six-length Arlington maiden winner on turf **Just Move On** (Jose Valdivia Jr.), Recruiting Ready (Stevens) and romping 10-length Ellis Park maiden winner **Not This Time** (Robby Albarado).

The Iroquois is carded as the eighth race at 5:59 p.m. (all times Eastern) on an 11-race card that begins at the special post time of 2:30 p.m. With a nationally-televised ACC showdown between the 10th-ranked **University of Louisville** football team and second-ranked **Florida State** at nearby Papa John's Cardinal Stadium on Saturday at noon, track officials proactively moved back Saturday's post time so fans could enjoy the best of both worlds and to help ease area traffic. Those who attend the big game are invited to visit Churchill Downs afterward free of charge on Saturday simply by showing their ticket stub.

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The Iroquois shares Saturday's spotlight with the 48th running of the \$200,000 Pocahontas Presented by TwinSpires.com (GII) for 2-year-old fillies, a 1 1/16 mile event that kicks off the "Road to the Kentucky Oaks" and is part of the Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In Juvenile Fillies Division."

The field for the Pocahontas, which goes as Race 10 at 6:59 p.m.: **Bling On the Music** (Luis Quinonez), **Dream Dancing** (Florent Geroux), **Pmluckysgirl** (Euclyn Prentice Jr.), **Jet Away Sue** (Francisco Torres), **Jordan's Henny** (Joe Rocco Jr.), **Someday Soon** (Luis Saez), **One Thirty One** (David Flores), **Ever So Clever** (Ricardo Santana Jr.), **Daddys Lil Darling** (Corey Lanerie) and **Sully's Dream** (Robby Albarado).

Other stakes races on Saturday's program are the 33rd running of the \$100,000 Locust Grove Presented by TwinSpires.com (GIII) for fillies and mares at 1 1/16 miles and the eight running of the \$100,000 Open Mind for fillies and mares at six furlongs.

The Locust Grove field (Race 3 at 3:29 p.m.): **Ahh Chocolate** (Brian Hernandez Jr.), **Romantic Vision** (Channing Hill), **Miss Pink Diva** (Shaun Bridgmohan), **Sweetgrass** (Chris Landeros), **Engaginglee** (Luis Saez) and **Innovative Idea** (Corey Lanerie).

The lineup for the Open Mind (Race 9 at 6:29 p.m.): **Spelling Again** (Luis Saez), **Mayla** (Miguel Mena), **Athena** (Brian Hernandez Jr.), **Kathballu** (Corey Lanerie), **Unbridledexplosion** (Florent Geroux), **Ramona's Wildcat** (Ricardo Santana Jr.), **Puntsville** (Victor Santiago), **Fioretti** (Sophie Doyle) and **I'm a Looker** (Robby Albarado).

Churchill Downs, the world's most legendary racetrack, has conducted Thoroughbred racing and presented America's greatest race, the Kentucky Derby, continuously since 1875. Located in Louisville, the flagship racetrack of Churchill Downs Incorporated (NASDAQ: CHDN) offers year-round simulcast wagering at the historic track. Churchill Downs will conduct the 143rd running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands on May 6, 2017. The track will conduct two more live racing meets in 2016: the September Meet (Sept. 16-Oct. 2) and the Fall Meet (Oct. 30-Nov. 27). Churchill Downs has hosted the Breeders' Cup World Championships eight times and the event will return to the track in 2018. Information is available at www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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